

Earth Day Green Build Event
Ambassador Mull's Welcoming Remarks
April 23, 2015, 17:00

Thank you, Magda, for your introduction. Thanks to the Polish Green Building Council and the American Chamber of Commerce for organizing this event. And thanks to our sponsors:

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I'd also like to thank our speakers:

- Peter Templeton, Vice President of the United States Green Building Council
- Jonathan Scott, author of "The Sustainable Business"
- In Wroclaw, Rafał Szurma, President of the Polish Green Building Council

Four and a half decades ago, people from all walks of life united around a single goal: to rally the public and raise awareness about the damage humans were doing to the environment. The first Earth Day was a call to action for every government official, every entrepreneur, and every citizen. Since then, Earth Day has evolved into an international movement. In the United States, environmental awareness has become part of our national consciousness, and the idea of protecting the environment has moved to the mainstream of American thought.

I'm especially pleased to join you today at the Earth Day Green Build Event, because few things have a greater impact on energy use than our buildings. In the United States, for example, last year commercial and industrial buildings used roughly 50 percent of the energy in the U.S. economy, at a cost of over \$400 billion. Buildings can be made much more efficient using a variety of cost effective improvements, while creating jobs and strengthening the economy.

That's why the United States continues to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings. We have been doing so since the early 1990s, with the beginning of green-building certification. The United States now has more than 3.6 billion square feet of building space that is certified by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, a widely recognized green building standard adopted by numerous government agencies and private companies. Last year, 675 million square feet of real estate space became certified, the largest in a single calendar year. And this year, the U.S. Green Building Council estimates that more than 40 percent of new nonresidential construction in the United States will be green.

Those numbers will just keep growing. President Obama views green buildings one of the best ways we can help the environment. As he said at the launch of his Better Buildings Initiative in 2011, upgrading the energy efficiency of buildings is one of the fastest, easiest, and cheapest ways to save money, cut down on harmful pollution, and create good jobs. And more and more companies and organizations are joining this initiative. The Better Buildings Alliance, a U.S. Department of Energy effort to promote

energy efficiency in U.S. commercial buildings, plays a crucial role in helping move our country closer to President Obama's target of 20 percent of energy savings by 2020. We are seeing remarkable progress. As of 2014, more than 180 leading companies and organizations representing approximately 10 billion square feet of building space have joined the Better Buildings Alliance and are taking steps to unlock energy efficiency savings.

So American companies are doing impressive work in this field, and they are eager to join Polish partners in promoting green buildings here. I am delighted to see so many American Chamber of Commerce members sharing their expertise with Polish partners. We are also encouraged to see private sector initiatives, such as the Polish Green Building Council, that strengthen our bilateral commercial ties and help to protect the environment. The Polish Green Building Council has been transforming the way buildings are designed, constructed, and operated since 2006.

Likewise, I applaud the efforts of non-governmental organizations that have initiated recent public discussions about the air quality in Polish cities.

You sometimes hear that environmental protection is detrimental to business, and that initiatives to protect the environment hold back the economy. Today's conference is proof that the opposite is true. Protecting the environment is not only the responsible thing to do; it can also be a powerful engine for economic growth by stimulating the development of green technologies. That's why I'm excited about an ambitious bilateral initiative between the United States and Poland, called the Polish-U.S. Innovation Program, or PLUS-IP. In collaboration between the U.S. Department of State and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland, PLUS-IP will expand cooperation, strengthen Poland's innovation ecosystem, and create links between our academic communities, industries, high-tech companies, and governments. We hope this program will lead to new technologies and commercial projects that will help save energy.

Today's Green Build event reflects the mission of the first Earth Day and our determination to forge a cleaner, healthier world for ourselves and our children. Congratulations on the hard work you have done to meet our responsibilities to future generations and to meet today's tests with passion and sense of purpose.

Thank you.